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ABSTRACT

A review of the journal of the Dutch Modern Language Association in the last three decades indicates that second language teaching in the Netherlands has evolved from something static into something very dynamic. Emphasis has shifted from knowledge about the language to knowledge of the language. Thirty years ago, Dutch textbooks were written by Dutch authors for the home market. Today they are written increasingly by foreign authors for a world market. Authentic materials are currently very popular, and contrastive analysis is not. Curriculum development has been in the forefront of the profession in the last 20 years. Focus has been on aims, objectives, and performance. The student is seen more as a learner, the teacher less as a pedagogue. Gurus in foreign language education have been replaced by technocrats, and teacher professional associations are struggling with the change. Teaching the individual language skills has come to require a variety of activities and methods, but classroom practice has not kept pace with this development. The Dutch used to be proud of their foreign language education, but current trends in language proficiency are discouraging. A 41-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

THREE DECADES OF FOREIGN-LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE NETHERLANDS

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1. *Introduction*

In 1986 the Dutch Modern Language Association (*V.v.L.i.L.T.*) celebrated its 75th anniversary. To mark the occasion it brought out a special issue of its journal *Levende Talen* (*LT*), exclusively devoted to the history of language teaching in the Netherlands since the turn of the century. At the end of my contribution to this issue (Van Essen 1986), surveying seventy-five years of grammar teaching, I quoted Baardman (1961) as having said: "As the distance grows less it becomes more difficult to get a clear view of the matter". At the time this difficulty occasioned me to conclude my article at the year 1968 and to dispose of any later developments in a few general remarks. What was true then is true today. Lack of distance is a difficulty facing anybody who writes contemporary history. It is not for nothing that the Dutch historian Von der Dunk draws our attention to it in the introduction to his book *De organisatie van het verleden*(1982): "Genuine historiography [would] therefore only [be] possible if a certain distance has occurred". And the problem does not grow less if, along with Von der Dunk (1982:49), we consider that it is only after a certain lapse of time that the primary and secondary sources that should enable us to give a full and reliable account of past events become accessible to us. Our predicament is further aggravated by the fact that the researcher, as a contemporary or even as a participant, is usually even more partial than any post-temporary historian. I am, I was, I do not know how to put it, both an eyewitness and a participant. I am therefore facing a precarious venture. Of course, I could refer the reader to what a number of philosophers have said (cf. Von der Dunk 1982:28), namely that the past is unknowable in principle (as no predictions can be derived from it), and leave it at that. But I have decided to face up to the challenge. And in so doing I have taken courage from the way in which others, bolder than myself, have described the recent past. In the preparation of this paper I have used the following sources (cf. Von der Dunk

1983:41): (1) my own eyewitness account of the past as the most directly available source; (2) the eyewitness accounts of others: "hearsay"; (3) written accounts. The latter type of source comprises contemporary professional literature and green papers. The green papers that never came to anything alone provide sufficient material for numerous PhD theses in the next century and for wistful reflections on what might have been but never was. As for the literature I have confined myself chiefly to *LT*. After all this was, and still is, the official organ of the association of those most directly involved in the foreign-language teaching operation in Holland. I have started with volume 45 (1959), the year in which my own history in foreign-language teaching began, and have worked my way through the ensuing years, scouring every fifth volume, up to the present (1989). In discussing these volumes I shall also take into account some of the more influential green papers. At first I wanted to apply the same principle to *Toegepaste Taalwetenschap in Artikelen* (*TTWiA*, the journal of the Dutch association of applied linguistics), but on second thoughts I rejected the idea for two reasons: (1) TTWiA is primarily concerned with research, not with teaching. Nor is it always concerned with research on *foreign*-language learning. But I will mention *TTWiA* whenever it is concerned with teaching. (2) My original plan simply proved too ambitious. In this paper I propose to restrict myself to institutional foreign-language education in Holland. I shall deal with it partly chronologically, partly thematically. I shall begin with a discussion of the professional literature. It will be obvious that my selections from the literature will be comparatively arbitrary. The choice of different volumes of *LT*, for example, would indubitably have led to a somewhat different picture. Also, writing history on the basis of the professional literature has its limitations. Remember that it is not the silent, conservative majority that fills the columns of the professional journals. So our picture needs complementation by data from teaching practice. Unfortunately, educational practice is not directly accessible to us. To supply this want I will not shrink from personal reminiscences. Besides I shall briefly discuss two surveys of teacher attitudes to classroom practice. I shall also mention in passing the results of an investigation among secondary-school students as to levels of performance in a foreign language after three years of training. And since educational practice is in part also determined by the coursebook used, some of these will also be reviewed. In so doing I will chiefly limit myself to those with which I am reasonably familiar, either as a user or as an evaluator. And finally I will provide a summary of what I regard as the distinguishing characteristics of the period.

2. *1959-1989*

1959. This is the year in which my own history of foreign-language (FL) teaching begins. I was demobbed from the R.N.A.F. where I had been in crypto- analysis and began the study of English. On the advice of one of

my teachers I became a student-member of *V.v.L.i.L.T.*. In this, at least for me, first volume of *LT*, there was still a preponderance of philological (in its Continental sense) articles, but also the final instalment of an interesting series of reflections on the future of FL teaching by Herman Bongers and a number of articles on vocabulary selection. When Bongers concluded his series a conference had just been held at Woudschoten (Holland) on the methodology of FL instruction. At this conference, and in the presence of the selfsame Bongers, the psychologist C.F. van Parreren had passed a remark to the effect that in secondary education it does not do "to make inferences for FL learning from the way in which the child learns his mother tongue". Nor was a "bilingual environment" relevant in this context (Van Parreren, 1959:2). This remark had gone down the wrong way with Bongers as is evident from the following quotation: "...whoever takes the trouble to study FL teaching at one of the leading centres will find that traditional methodology has long been discarded and that one has been working for years [...] according to a methodology that has important features in common with the learning process as it develops in children learning their mother tongue or in toddlers growing up in a bilingual environment" (Bongers 1959:228). With all respect due to Bongers I am of the opinion that th warning Van Parreren gave at the time was a very appropriate one and one that we could take to heart even today. For in Holland we have to do chiefly with *foreign*-language teaching in educational settings. For this reason conclusions drawn from research into *second*-language acquisition cannot be accepted for FL learning without further evidence. Bongers also reproached Van Parreren for introducing new terms: "*Learning through cognitive structures* and *a receptive or autonomous learning process* are terms which aren't nearly so clear as *code-aspect* and *behaviour aspect*...". What Bongers was referring to here was the distinction made in 1937 by his friend H.E. Palmer between "language as code" and "language as behaviour", a distinction Palmer had derived from the Saussure (Bongers 1959:229). But the question of the historical priority of this dichotomy does not concern us here. The point at issue for us is that the terms distinguished embody two views of FL teaching, the "code" one relying on cognitive psychology and the "behaviour" one leaning on behaviourism. Moreover, the distinction entails a number of other issues, which have continually played a part in Dutch FL teaching over the past thirty years, such as the question of whether a foreign language is learnt by understanding or by practice, or whether the structure of the language should be taught implicitly or explicitly. In a recent article by Bolte (*LT* 1989:662) about the interactive basis of communicative capacity, the distinction re-appears, but now as the antithesis between "manipulating the language" and "acting with the language".

1964. Fifteen per cent of the articles in this volume of *LT* relate to FL teaching. One is about the language laboratory, one about English grammar for the first year. The latter publication, by the Methodology Commission, contains the following observation: "It is of greater impor-

tance that students should be able to automatically comprehend and apply the principal sentence patterns than that the vocabulary should exceed a certain minimum, for if one handles the sentence patterns correctly the expansion of the vocabulary leads to an expansion of the potentialities of expression, but without a command of the proper sentence construction correct language use is out of the question". It may even lead to "total incomprehensibility" (*LT* 1964:163). Note that twenty-five years ago even the Methodology Commission insisted on formal correctness. And on this commission were people like Bongers, Breitenstein, Kuiper, Mossel, and Van Willigen. What manner of men were they? Of the people I have named I have known only Bongers and Breitenstein well. But all of them were classroom teachers. Language officers or language consultants there were few in those days. Bongers was a household name in those days, a man of great merit in the field of FL education. In recognition of this the *British* Royal Academy bestowed a fellowship on him. In 1963, when I was a teacher of English at a secondary modern school in Rotterdam, my colleagues and I paid a visit to Bongers's school to attend one of the demonstrations that he used to give of his Oral Approach Method. This was a direct method based on behaviourist principles, which also drew on insights from Gestalt psychology. All of us were deeply impressed by what Bongers had been able to achieve with his pupils in the first year in the way of speaking the FL. On the return trip one of my colleagues remarked: "What Bongers can do, only Bongers can do". And up to a point this was true: the great man possessed a colossal charisma. Bongers and the other pioneers in the field of FL teaching we had in those days were people who were actuated not only by a vision of the future of FL teaching but first and foremost by pedagogical motives and by an idealistic perspective of the future of mankind, such as is also found among the first generation of Reformers (cf. Jespersen 1904:179). In this connection I should like to quote from an article by Bongers in the same volume of *LT*: "today [FL teaching] is not so much a cultural matter as a matter of prime importance in world politics" (Bongers 1964:38). This position may seem somewhat extreme, but the point at issue here is that with the vanishing of gurus from FL education the overall view of the pupil has also disappeared. It is true that in the seventies we got pupil-centred instruction in return, but let's face it, educationalists or educational sociologists and our old-fashioned paternalistic pedagogues are not really the same! And this was the kind of difference that front-line teachers had to try and make up for. Bongers's above-mentioned polemic against Van Parreren throws into relief another point of difference with the present, namely that the views of the old pioneers often lacked any empirical foundation, whereas it is the very hallmark of present-day applied linguistics that it is data-orientated and that advice and views on FL teaching have no validity unless they are backed up by empirical evidence (Van Els & Radstake 1987:14). In many respects 1964 was a turning-point. To meet the demands that the post-war world made on FL education, 14 secondary schools embarked on a teaching programme leading up to a school-leaving examination that reflected modern views about FL teaching. Thus, the

translations were scrapped from the examination, whereas an oral and a written comprehension test were included. At the oral examination the candidate was required to talk for at least three minutes in the foreign language on the basis of a text handed to (him/her) before he was tested. Articles from newspapers and magazines were formally admitted as examination matter. Much of what constituted this experimental school-leaving examination was subsequently incorporated into the regular examination programmes for the new secondary (modern) schools. While these developments were taking place, however, the majority of Holland's over 10,000 FL teachers were totally ignorant of what went on. So, with the new Education Act, which was regarded as the finalization of these developments, about to be introduced in 1968, in-service refresher courses had to be hurriedly put together. I myself took an active part in the teaching of some of these. Together with Father Mooijman and others I travelled up and down the country to speak to gatherings of FL teachers at secondary modern schools, expounding and demonstrating modern methodology. As background literature for these meetings we used Lado (1957 and 1964), Brooks (1964), Halliday, McIntosh & Strevens (1964), and later Rivers (1968). I have the best of memories of these meetings. Much better, for example, than of the so-called Orientation Courses which, it should be said, under the inspiring leadership of G. Smit, we ran on behalf of the Three Pedagogical Centres for FL teachers at secondary schools. I remember our teachers at secondary modern schools as better motivated and less sceptical than our grammar school teachers. An article laying the groundwork for much of our future FL education and applied linguistics appeared in the same volume of *LT*. It was by the British scholar Peter Strevens and had been translated into Dutch by Bongers (Strevens 1964). Just because *V.v.L.i.L.T.*'s Central Committee saw in Strevens's piece the endorsement of their own policy (see Van Willigen 1964:613), I thought it appropriate to review its chief elements here. As the causes of what he regarded as the "revolution" in FL teaching Strevens saw "the greater ease with which one travels, the growth of tourism, the develoment of radio and television, the growing internationality of the programmes put out by the media, the increased facilities for education, the growth of organizations for international co-operation, and many other factors" (Strevens 1964:615). Did Strevens see any differences between 1964 and 1940? He did: FL teaching had evolved from a trade into an applied science, backed up by technology. The craftsmanship of old had been replaced by specialized products, based upon linguistic analysis and on the principles of programmed instruction (PI), supported by language laboratories and filmstrip projection, deployed in small classes undergoing intensive training and in self-study cubicles, and evaluated by means of objective tests. And today [1964] the language and the literature lessons were also kept more strictly apart. Linguistic insight had also grown. One had become more keenly alive to the fact that, since the speech community is heterogeneous, those varieties of the FL should be described that our students are in need of. Account should also be taken of the learning needs of our pupils. Here the need for individual-

ization made itself felt. I shall return to this issue later. As far as the feeder disciplines are concerned Strevens saw a central role for linguistics: once it had supplied contemporary descriptions a move could be made in the direction of improving language courses by means of contrastive analysis (CA). It would be some time, however, before contrastive descriptions would be available and in the meantime one would have to make do with error analysis (EA). Applied Linguistics would have to concern itself with the selection, ordering, and presentation of course content, CA, studies in the field of comprehension and comprehensibility, bilingualism and multilingualism. Psychology ought to concern itself with the learning process, more specifically the learning process relative to the factor "age", PI, and teaching machines, but also with level, progress and skill tests. On an organizational level Strevens pleaded for the creation of a national centre for information on language teaching (CILT) in addition to more international co-operation. In the sixties and seventies the foundation of such a national centre in the Netherlands was the long cherished ambition of not a few experts in the field of FL teaching. That it failed to materialize was due in large part to the emergence of Institutes of Applied Linguistics, which gradually began to fill the need for information on language teaching (Van Els 1974:502). In my account of FL teaching in the Netherlands I have used Strevens's topics as points of reference for the years that followed its publication.

1969. One year after the introduction of the new Education Act, this volume of *LT* naturally contains discussions about the first new (*havo*) school-leaving examinations and about the diffulties of designing objective tests to go with existing coursebooks. As for the new school-leaving exams, they had "come in for a lot of criticism and besides pleas for the reintroduction of translations there were also such as recommended different ways...". Polemics for and against the new school-leaving exams, more particularly about the centrally administered tests have since been a regular feature of both the professional literature and the dailies. The statement just quoted might as well have come from a recent newspaper report. The 1969 volume of *LT* also contained an article by J.W. Meijs (1969) about transformational-generative grammar and FL teaching. In this article the profession is being asked the by now well-known question of whether any explicit knowledge of the language (Palmer's "language as code") would lead to proficiency in the foreign language (Palmer's "language as behaviour"). Meijs holds the view that "generative knowledge" of the foreign language is also, and much more readily, acquired by intentional confrontation with and practice in the foreign language. If I am not mistaken the two articles in the same volume by A.G. Sciarone (1969) on CA are both the first and the last on this subject in *LT*. I cannot go into the details of Sciarone's two contributions here. For those who know this scholar it will not be a surprise to learn that he makes a strong plea for more and better linguistic knowledge among applied linguists. In the same vein Sciarone offers a *linguistic* explanation for a phenomenon that others tend to view as a *psychological* problem: the overgeneraliza-

tion of a grammatical rule (i.e. the absorption of marginal cases, which may be similar to the source language, by the majority: "Does he be ill" instead of "Is he ill?"). A publication in the same volume that is of interest to applied linguists is a draft scheme for FL teacher training by Van Ek & Mossel (1969). This article maps out the future applied linguist as well as his/her training. In the same volume I also came across the announcement of the introduction of English in the Primary School (EIBO). The aim of the project, it said, was "to teach every child a usable knowledge, however small, of at least one foreign language and to use the sensitive age c. 8-12 for the purpose" (Breitenstein 1969:273). EIBO was to be piloted at six primary schools in the Utrecht area. The project was to be conducted by J.A.M Carpay. The first phase of EIBO was concluded and evaluated long ago (Carpay & Bol 1974). The second phase got isolated from the new logistic organization and in 1978 EIBO passed into the hands of the Foundation for Curriculum Development (SLO) at Enschede. In 1986 EIBO was introduced into the whole of Dutch primary education. Recently a research institute in the North of the Netherlands (RION) has assessed the current EIBO situation (Edelenbos 1988). This report shows that since its introduction English has acquired a permanent if modest place in the primary school curriculum (3.5 percent of the time available). The language is taught almost exclusively through course-books that are commercially obtainable and that the teacher follows closely. During the lesson the emphasis is on the speaking and listening skills. In teaching these skills the majority of teachers adhere to traditional methods. There is little if any individualization of instruction. As far as the latter is concerned, the seventies were very much the Age of Individualization, at least on paper. In those days our institute (i.e. the Groningen Institute of Applied Linguistics) was collaborating with a number of comprehensive schools on a project for individualizing FL instruction. I vividly remember the countless meetings devoted to the topic of the uniqueness of each individual pupil who should determine his/her lot in absolute autonomy. But I also remember that I could not help feeling sorry for the teachers, who were being supervised by scores of soft-spoken welfare workers. Within the framework of pupil-centred learning FL teachers had to design their own teaching materials which, in the shape of multicoloured handouts, and helped by the general climate of permissiveness, would litter the classroom like confetti. There has been so much suffering because of this. Individualization requires a lot of planning at school level. It became popular when it was thought that by individualizing instruction it would be possible to postpone the selection of children who attend secondary schools. For research had shown that the factor of "social environment" plays a crucial role in the selection of pupils for post-primary education (*Verder na de basisschool* 1982:23). In the decades that lie behind us several approaches to individualization have been tried out such as those which take into account the learner's needs, rate and style of learning, interests, etc.. The most recent variety is perhaps that according to "topic of interest", which has been applied with

a degree of success in some secondary modern schools (*Mavo-projekt*). But today individualization has largely gone into eclipse.

1974. This volume begins with a policy statement to the effect that in addition to articles bearing on the subject taught the editors would also like to include articles in which research is translated into practice (Hawinkels 1974:95). As if to contradict their own policy the editors subsequently devoted an almost complete issue of *LT* to experimental research into FL learning. The issue concerned opened with an extremely readable contribution by Ickenroth containing the following statement: "[in my] survey of foreign research I have gradually become increasingly removed from the direct questions of educational practice"! (Ickenroth 1974:487). That the editors did not succeed in clearly defining their target readership appears from the fact that one group of readers broke away and founded their own journal: *ENGELS*,"a journal by and for teachers" as it said in the subtitle. Shortly after Dutch applied linguists also founded their own organ: *TTWiA*, which first came out in 1976. Thus theory and practice started to increasingly grow apart. For one who regularly attended *V.v.L.i.L.T.*'s annual meeting this impression was further reinforced by the fact that at these meetings one saw fewer and fewer practising teachers and more and more people from the logistic and educational support services. It was equally significant that vacancies on the committee were increasingly filled not by classroom teachers but by members of the educational support services or university departments. I am of the opinion that here we have to do with one of the big differences between then and now: while in the old days it was still possible for an Executive Officer of a teachers' association to get by with a sound knowledge of his/her subject and some rudimentary pedagogics, today he/she needs to be thoroughly familiar with preliminary reports, green papers, memoranda, and what have you in order to be able to survive at all in the policy-making jungle. And what classroom teacher possesses this familiarity? In the *LT* issue we just discussed I also found an article by M. Boot on course evaluation by computer (Boot 1974). In the mid seventies course evaluation was a popular issue: Van Maris & Sciarone did it by computer for French (Van Maris & Sciarone 1976), Van Essen et al (Van Essen & Simons 1976 and Van Essen & Van Ess 1977) did it on an intersubjective basis for English. Surface course evaluation has since passed into the hands of *Centrale Registratie Leermiddelen* (today called *Nationaal Informatiecentrum Leermiddelen*) and quite useful guidelines for the evaluation of FL language coursebooks have been drawn up by Mondria & De Vries (1987). It should not be inferred from what I said above about *TTWiA* that the volumes of this journal never contained any contributions relevant to FL methodology. On the contrary, the first issue contained a number of extremely interesting reflections on the relation between linguistics and language teaching in which, if I remember correctly, the former came off rather badly. Subsequent issues of TTWiA dealt with among other things curriculum development, including the familiar topic of vocabulary selection. There seems to have been some

tacit understanding between *LT* and TTWiA to the effect that *LT* would place articles on vocabulary learning (cf. Eringa 1974 and Schouten-Van Parreren & Van Parreren 1979) and *TTWiA* those on vocabulary selection and word recognition. Of late this policy has been changed, witness a symposium held by Anéla, the Dutch association of applied linguistics, in the spring of 1989. For quite some time vocabulary selection has been out of favour due to the creative aspect of language use postulated in TG circles, but today it seems to be a fashionable topic again. After all our skeleton of required terminal behaviour (*Eindtermen*) needs some flesh on it. In addition to curriculum development the following topics were also dealt with in *TTWiA*: "language tests" (nr 5), "education as an interactional problem" (nr 16b), and teacher education.

1979. This year is still largely dominated by arguments for and against the so-called *Nota Aanzet*, a green paper put out by Van Ek & Groot in 1976, providing a framework for discussion of a national curriculum for modern foreign languages. Even though the term "notional-functional" was not used as such by the authors, the green paper implicitly embodied a notional- functional approach. No green paper on FL education in this country has ever caused such a stir. It was distributed on a massive scale and the discussions which ensued could have served as a model for the Government to settle national issues, like that of nuclear energy. Today we do not have to go over all that ground again. It is sufficient to state that in addition to being widely acclaimed, the green paper also came in for a lot of criticism. However this may be, the way in which language use is being conceived in this green paper, namely as a form of co-operation through language, which takes place somewhere, between people who stand in some social and psychological relationship to each other, who are talking about something, who want something from each other, in a word as a situational, socio-psychological, co-operative, meaningful act, matched, perhaps not wholly unintentionally, by developments in pragmatics and sociolinguistics. That's why the green paper gave a tremendous boost to initiatives towards communicative language teaching in Holland that had derived their inspiration from developments in these feeder disciplines. It is no exaggeration to say that the discussions following on the publication of the *Nota Aanzet* have definitively shifted the emphasis in our thinking about FL teaching from "language as code" to "language as behaviour".

1984. We are now getting closer to the present and our vision is getting increasingly blurred. A look at *LT* shows us that this volume contains little that is new. Everything seems to be quiet on the educational front. There is an article which contains suggestions for developing the speaking skill and an article about cassettes, one about the examination programme and one about communicative language teaching, one about language and culture, and so on and so forth. But this volume also contains a complaint. A complaint to the effect that an association of well-meaning amateurs such as *V.v.L.i.L.T* cannot possibly keep up with the

pace at which education is being professionalized (1984:274). Volume 1984 also has a special issue devoted to cursory-topical FL teaching (if this means anything to anyone outside the Netherlands), especially within the so-called *Mavo-projekt*. Individualization revisited.

1989. We are now in the middle of actuality. Old topics that are being treated in this volume are word acquisition and curriculum development. But there also new elements: models of lessons on a notional-functional basis as well as contributions from the classroom about language and culture, German grammar, role-play, and so on. This volume contains a special issue about *Advies over de voorlopige eindtermen basisvorming in het voortgezet onderwijs*, a green paper describing the required terminal behaviour after three years of secondary education. So many green papers are being put out these days that teachers are barely able to cope with them all. My own head swims, because I have got too close. I should like to take a few steps backwards in order to be able to discuss some other things.

Coursebooks. The book with which I started my own career was of the direct type (*On Modern Lines*) and had been written by students of the legendary Brother Rombouts. It was based on Reform principles. It was far less popular than *English in a New Form*, which I used later. Though of the grammar-translation method kind, this book had a connected text at the beginning of each lesson. Later I used Bongers's *Oral Approach* and after that *This is England*, an audiovisual course on which I myself had worked together with Mooijman and others. This coursebook I used until 1971. All these coursebooks had been produced in the Netherlands and some of them in collaboration with native speakers. In subsequent years, when I was no longer a secondary schoolteacher, coursebooks were increasingly imported from abroad and either adapted to the Dutch situation or not at all. A very popular coursebook of this type according to the direct method was *New Concept English* by L.G. Alexander. An originally Dutch coursebook on direct principles that has stuck it out for a very long time was Look. The relative popularity of transformational-generative grammar played into the hands of the more conservative teachers (and publishers). This is perhaps why the seventies saw an increase in the number of coursebooks in which either grammar rules were again taught explicitly or the possibility to do so was offered. A coursebook which was quite popular in this respect was *Learning English. Modern Course*. At the end of the seventies more and more so-called communicative coursebooks began to appear. A recent survey shows, however, that for all their communicative pretensions such coursebooks do not teach us how to communicate, simply because they do not incorporate the pragmatic rules which govern the use of the foreign language in its socio-cultural context (Mondria-De Vries 1989). Besides coursebooks some surveys, carried out among teachers, give us some indications of what goes on in the Dutch classroom. More than a decade ago Van [illegible]wieteren (1979) conducted a survey among secondary modern school

teachers (*mavo-3* en *mavo-4*). Van Zwieteren found a dearth of appropriate teaching methods, even if the majority of teachers were prepared to expand their methodological arsenal. He also found that, even though teachers devoted a lot of attention to explicit grammar with a view to the writing skill, less than half of their pupils attained a reasonable level of proficiency in this skill. Between 1981 and 1896 Van Els & Buis (1987) attempted to chart classroom practice in the upper forms of secondary schools (*havo/vwo*) by conducting telephone interviews with and sending out questionnaires to FL teachers. I may be allowed to quote some of their findings. In the period under investigation the four language skills were increasingly taught separately. Teachers are conspicuously short of methods and activities for teaching the speaking skill. In teaching this skill they pay less attention to grammatical correctness than they used to do, but much attention is still paid to grammar when the writing skill is involved. In the teaching of both these skills the question of whether "the message comes across" is regarded as crucial. Teachers display a large variety of methods and activities for the teaching of reading, while they allow themselves to be dominated in the teaching of listening by the tests developed by the Dutch National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO). In the teaching of both these skills there is a growing tendency to occasionally use the native language, especially during the French and German lessons. Certain elements of the grammar-translation method are still highly valued, such as the explicit learning of grammar rules and the learning of bilingual wordlists. The language laboratory, which in 1981 was still used by over a quarter of the teachers interviewed, was used in 1986 by only 5 percent of our teachers. In 1986 the Groningen Institute of Applied Linguistics (Van der Tuin et al 1986) carried out an investigation into the level of achievement in reading, listening and speaking of pupils in post-elementary education (*lbo, mavo, havo*) after three years of training in a foreign language (English, French, German). The sample was drawn from a population of twelve schools distributed over the four Northern provinces of the Netherlands. The aim of the investigation was to gain an insight into what may reasonably be required of and thus be incorporated into the terminal behaviour of all students after three years of integrated post-elementary FL teaching. As far as the reading and listening skills in German and English are concerned 80 percent of the subjects did reasonably well or even better. That is to say that they were able to provide correct answers to two out of three questions about authentic texts, such as a newspaper article and a weather forecast. This was also true of the reading skill in French, but for the listening skill in French the score was lower. Oral proficiency in English was deeply disappointing, that in French even more so. Perhaps the latter was to be expected. By way of comparison, while the transfer of information was satisfactory for 70 percent of the pupils in the case of German, this was only 25 percent in the case of English. The reading and listening abilities do not differ for *lbo, mavo-3*, and *havo-3* pupils, but oral proficiency does: *havo-3* pupils do better than *mavo-3* pupils and the latter do better than *lbo* pupils. As for English, we should do well not to overestimate our

pupils' syntactic and lexical knowledge: 20 percent of them will not be able to use productively more than one-third of the basic syntactic rules or know receptively more than 500 out of the first 1,000 most frequent words. In the light of these findings one may well ask whether the taxonomy of terminal behaviour (*Advies over de voorlopige eindtermen basisvorming in het voortgezet onderwijs*) which has recently been put forward, is indeed a feasible proposition.

3. *Retrospect*

I am nearing the end of this paper. Looking back on the past three decades I should like to recap briefly the main characteristics of the period.

1. From something static FL teaching has evolved into something very dynamic.
2. The emphasis has been shifted from knowledge about the language to knowledge of the language.
3. Thirty years ago coursebooks were written by Dutch authors for the home market. These days they are increasingly written by foreign authors for a world market. Authentic materials are all the rage. CA is out.
4. Curriculum development, more specifically aims, objectives, and terminal behaviour, have been very much in the forefront, especially during the past two decades. Teaching methodology has remained underexposed.
5. The pupil has become more of a learner, the teacher less of a pedagogue.
6. Gurus have vanished from FL education. They have been replaced by technocrats.
7. Teachers' associations such as *V.v.L.i.L.T.* are fighting a losing battle.
8. Teaching the individual language skills has come to require a variety of activities and methods, but classroom practice has not kept pace with this development.
9. The Dutch used to be proud of their foreign-language education.

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